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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 000081

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SUBJECT: AN INSIDER'S VIEW OF RUGGIERO'S SACKING

REF: 2001 ROME 06753

CLASSIFIED BY: A/POL MINISTER COUNSELOR GARY ROBBINS.

REASON: 1.6 X.6

GOOD RIDDANCE

1. (C) ON 7 JANUARY, THE HEAD OF THE MFA'S BALKAN OFFICE, MAURIZIO MASSARI (STRICTLY PROTECT) TOLD POLOFF THAT HE WAS "NOT SORRY TO SEE FORMER FM RUGGIERO GO," AND THAT THIS VIEW WAS SHARED BE MANY AT HIS LEVEL (ROUGHLY, THE EQUIVALENT OF OFFICE DIRECTOR IN THE DOS). MASSARI SAID THAT THERE WAS SOME "BITTERNESS" AMONG HIS COLLEAGUES OVER THE "LOST OPPORTUNITY" CAUSED BY RUGGIERO'S PUBLIC BICKERING WITH HIS BOSS AND REFUSAL TO CONSULT WITH HIS FELLOW MINISTERS OVER MATTERS OF GOVERNMENT POLICY. RUGGIERO COULD HAVE USED HIS REPUTATION AMONG OTHER EURO-MINISTERS AND HIS SKILLS AS AN ACCOMPLISHED DIPLOMAT TO ADVANCE ITALY'S STANDING AS A WORLD LEADER. THAT CHANCE WAS LOST WHEN RUGGIERO REFUSED TO PLAY THE POLITICAL GAME. MASSARI ALSO CONFIRMED OUR VIEWS, REPORTED SEPTEL, THAT RUGGIERO'S DEPARTURE WAS A REFLECTION OF INTER-GOVERNMENTAL AND PERSONALITY CLASHES, AND DID NOT REFLECT ANY MOVEMENT TOWARDS A MORE ISOLATIONIST, LESS PRO-EUROPEAN FOREIGN POLICY BY THE GOI.

HE'S NO DINI

2. (C) MASSARI COMPARED RUGGIERO'S PERFORMANCE WITH THAT OF FORMER FM DINI, WHO WAS, IN MASSARI'S VIEW, ALSO A SKILLED INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMAT BUT, IN CONTRAST TO RUGGIERO, A TEAM PLAYER. FROM A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE, MASSARI HOPED THAT THE NEXT FM WOULD PAY MORE ATTENTION TO ITALY'S ROLE IN BALKAN STABILIZATION, AN AREA ALMOST TOTALLY IGNORED BY RUGGIERO.

WHO'S NEXT

3. (C) WHEN ASKED TO SPECULATE ON RUGGIERO'S SUCCESSOR, MASSARI SAID THAT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO POINT TO ANY ONE INDIVIDUAL. HOWEVER, HE HAD JUST RETURNED FROM A MEETING CHAIRED BY THE DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR EUROPEAN AFFAIRS (A/S EQUIVALENT) AND OFFICE DIRECTORS, WHERE CONSENSUS SPECULATION WAS THAT WHATEVER THE CHOICE, IT WOULD BE MADE MORE ON THE BASIS OF POLITICAL LOYALTY THAN FOREIGN POLICY ACUMEN. MASSARI ALSO SAID HE WOULD "NOT BE SURPRISED" IF ITALY'S AMBASSADOR TO THE EU (AND FORMER MFA SECRETARY GENERAL) UMBERTO VATTANI, WHO "ENJOYS PM BERLUSCONI'S FULL CONFIDENCE" WAS BROUGHT BACK FROM BRUSSELS TO RUN THE TECHNICAL/SUBSTANTIVE OPERATIONS OF THE MINISTRY, POSSIBLY AS AN UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE OR (AGAIN) AS SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE MFA.

4. (C) COMMENT. WHILE MASSARI'S VIEW MAY NOT BE SHARED ACROSS THE ENTIRE MFA, PARTICULARLY AMONG THOSE BROUGHT IN BY RUGGIERO, WE HEARD SIMILAR RUMBLINGS FROM HIGH-LEVEL CONTACTS IN THE MINISTRY PRIOR TO RUGGIERO'S RESIGNATION (REFTEL). WE WILL CONTINUE TO PROBE OUR INTERLOCUTORS FOR THEIR THOUGHTS ON RUGGIERO'S DEPARTURE, AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, ANY CHANGES IN THE DIRECTION OF ITALIAN FOREIGN POLICY HIS FIRING MAY PORTEND.

5. (U) MINIMIZE CONSIDERED.
POPE

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